



**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503**

PRESS RELEASE
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2007

CONTACT: STEPHEN E. SCHATZ
(202) 395-5744 / (202) 340-3054

**NEW HEALTHCARE CODES TO ENHANCE
PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
-CODES WILL MAINSTREAM SUBSTANCE ABUSE SCREENING AND
INTERVENTION IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS-**

(Washington, D.C.) - Today, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) announced the publication of new healthcare codes for substance abuse screening and brief intervention (SBI). The new Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) codes, issued by the American Medical Association (AMA), will make it possible for the health care system to efficiently report screening services for drug and alcohol abuse. The process will increase the likelihood that those with substance use disorders will receive an appropriate intervention, thereby reducing the number of patients with substance use disorders. This is the first time that a physician can dedicate both time and resources to assess their patients' risky substance use characteristics and behaviors. The new healthcare codes will go into effect on January 1, 2008.

"Substance use is one of the most significant public health challenges in the United States," said Deputy Director Dr. Bertha K. Madras. "Drug and alcohol use adversely affects the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities, and costs billions of dollars every year in healthcare costs, as well as legal and workplace expenses. These new healthcare codes will strengthen the doctor-patient relationship, and incorporate a powerful preventive public health resource in America's healthcare system. Doctors will now be able to assess their patients' drug and alcohol use - as they already do for diabetes and obesity - and work to prevent, reduce, and treat those with substance abuse disorders."

The AMA published the new procedural codes, providing medical professionals a means to communicate concisely and reliably with colleagues, patients and insurers about screening for substance use and appropriate interventions. Doctors and other medical professionals will now be able to ask their patients a series of questions (see sample) designed to provide an on-the-spot assessment of drug and alcohol use, and if necessary, offer immediate intervention.

"Today, there are an estimated 22 million Americans who abuse or are addicted to drugs or alcohol," continued Dr. Madras. "Of these, nearly 95 percent of them are unaware that they meet the clinical criteria for substance abuse or addiction, and have not sought treatment. These new codes will enable physicians to reach those in harm's way - during a doctor's visit - and provide them with appropriate medical services. Widespread screening and brief interventions can effectively reduce substance use disorders and their adverse effects on the human brain, body, and behavior. Brief interventions are medically reliable, cost-effective, and endure."

The new AMA Level I CPT® Codes for medical services were published October 8, 2007, and will become fully effective in January 2008. The two codes (99408 and 99409) will streamline

reporting and the reimbursement procedure for doctors who perform alcohol and/or substance (other than tobacco) abuse structured screening and brief intervention.

“The new procedures outlined by these codes can have a positive impact on every American touched by substance use, and seen in the healthcare system,” concluded Dr. Madras.

“Screening and brief interventions can keep patients healthier, improve physicians’ performance measures, and reduce hospital and healthcare costs. Implemented properly, screening and brief intervention is the most transformative substance use tool for medicine in decades.”

Below are some sample questions from the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) that doctors may use to perform a SBI with their patients:

- *Can you get through the week without using drugs?*
- *Are you always able to stop using drugs when you want to?*
- *Do you ever feel bad or guilty about your drug use?*
- *Have you neglected your family because of your use of drugs?*
- *Have you been in trouble at work because of your use of drugs?*
- *Have you engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drugs?*
- *Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms (felt sick) when you stopped taking drugs?*
- *Have you had medical problems as a result of your drug use (e.g., memory loss, hepatitis, convulsions, bleeding, etc.)?*

For more information, please visit: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/>.